

## Message Text

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62

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 /072 W

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R 202230Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0671

INFO USMISSION USUN NY

ALL CONSULATES IN MEXICO

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MX PINT

SUBJ: ECHEVERRIA SAYS HE'LL RETIRE WHEN TERM ENDS

1. DISCOUNTING IN ONE STATEMENT POSSIBILITIES THAT HE WOULD BECOME UN SECRETARY GENERAL OR PRESIDENT OF THE PRI (RULING PARTY), PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA OCT 17 SAID HE WOULD RETIRE TO PRIVATE LIFE WHEN HIS TERM OF OFFICE ENDS 1 DEC 1976.

2. THE PRESIDENT RESPONDED TO REPORTERS' QUESTIONS THAT HE SAW LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS BECAUSE THE GREAT POWERS RAN THAT INSTITUTION AND BECAUSE HE "WOULD BE A THIRD WORLD SECRETARY." ECHEVERRIA ALSO DENIED THAT HE WOULD BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE PRI, WHICH HAD BEEN ADVOCATED LAST WEEK BY SENATE LEADER ENRIQUE OLIVARES SANTANA. ECHEVERRIA SAID OPPORTUNITY HAD TO BE GIVEN TO NEW GENERATIONS IN THE PARTY -- FOR HIMSELF, HE HAD A LOT OF BOOKS TO READ AND PERHAPS SOME TO WRITE.

3. COMMENT: THE SUGGESTION THAT ECHEVERRIA WOULD BECOME PRI PRESIDENT TOUCHED A SENSITIVE NERVE HERE, POLITICANS AWKWARDLY DODGING REPORTERS' QUESTIONS WITH COMMENTS SUCH AS "THE PARTY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE", POLITICAL COLUMNISTS COMING OUT  
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RATHER STRONGLY AGAINST THE IDEA. IN AN UNUSUALLY DIRECT

EDITORIAL OCT 20, EXCELSIOR ASSESSED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION AS RESTORING TRANQUILITY (AFTER 1968 RIOTS) AND ENCOURAGING PUBLIC DISSENT AND MORE OPEN COMMENT ON ILLS IN MEXICAN SOCIETY. THIS WAS LARGELY POSSIBLE, EXCELSIOR SAID, BECAUSE EXECUTIVE POWER WAS UNIPERSONAL WITHIN THE SIX YEAR TERM. AFTER HIS TERM ENDS ECHEVERRIA MIGHT WELL DEDICATE HIS TALENTS TO "WELL DELIMITED TASKS IN THE PUBLIC REALM ... BUT THE POLITICAL AND JURIDICAL POWER OF THE PRESIDENCE MUST BE TRANSMITTED IN ITS ENTIRELY ON DEC 1, 1976 TO JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO. HISTORY INDICATES THIS. THE HEALTH OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS CALLS FOR IT."

4. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT WILL QUIET FEARS, AROUSED BY HIS APPARENTLY UNILATERAL DECISION TO NAME LOPEZ PORTILLO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND CHANGES IN THE PRI AFTERWARDS (SEE MEXICO 8836), THAT HE SEEKS TO RETAIN A POLITICAL ROLE AFTER HE LEAVES OFFICE. WITH THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL SLOT LOOKING MORE IMPROBABLE EVERY DAY, MEXICANS ARE WONDERING JUST WHAT WILL OCCUPY THE PRESIDENT WHEN HIS TERM IS OVER. THE ONE THING THEY ARE CONFIDENT HE WILL NOT DO IS RETIRE TO HIS STUDY. BRANDIN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** RETIREMENT, PRESS COMMENTS, PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 20 OCT 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** izenbei0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975MEXICO09226  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750364-0404  
**From:** MEXICO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Line Count:** 83  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** izenbei0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02 JUL 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <02 JUL 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <17 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ECHEVERRIA SAYS HE'LL RETIRE WHEN TERM ENDS  
**TAGS:** PINT, MX, (ECHEVERRIA ALVAREZ, LUIS)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006